

SIMIA SYNDACTYLA RAFFLES, 1821 (MAMMALIA:
HYLOBATIDAE); PROPOSAL TO GIVE THIS NAME
PRECEDENCE OVER *SIMIA GIBBON* C. MILLER, 1779.
Z.N.(S.) 2195.

By Colin P. Groves (*Department of Prehistory and
Anthropology, Australian National University,
Canberra, A.C.T. 2600, Australia*)

In 1821 Sir Stamford Raffles (*Trans. Linn. Soc. London, vol. 13: 241*) described as *Simia syndactyla* a new species of gibbon-like ape, the Siamang, from Sumatra. Under this specific name the siamang is universally known today, whether as a species of the genus *Hylobates* or as representative of a distinct genus *Symphalangus* Gloger, 1841.

2. The same species had, however, been previously described in 1779 by C. Miller ('Extract from several letters from Mr. Charles Miller (son of the late botanic gardener) now settled at Fort Marlbro' near Bencoolen; giving some account of that place, of the interior parts of Sumatra, and of a neighbouring island never known to have been visited by any European'. *Phil. Trans. Roy. Soc. vol. 68: 161-179, for 1778*); he identified it as *Simia gibbon* Buffon, and gave a brief description of it, from which it is perfectly clear that the Siamang is meant. This was the first time Buffon's vernacular name 'gibbon' - not in fact applied to a siamang! - had been given a binominal form.

3. Since its description, the name *gibbon* has been used as a valid name only once: by Matschie, 1898 (*Die unterscheidenden Merkmale der Hylobates Arten. S.B.Ges.naturf.Fr.Berlin, 1898: 209-212*), in the combination *Hylobates gibbon*. All other authors, without exception as far as can be discovered, use Raffle's name *syndactylus*.

4. Although therefore Miller's name *gibbon* is an unused senior synonym and not likely to be brought out and dusted off, there are a few individuals who enjoy playing the nomenclature game for its own sake and resurrecting old names, to the dismay of their colleagues; therefore, in the interests of stability, the International Commission is requested:

- (1) to use its plenary powers to rule that the name *Simia syndactyla* Raffles, 1821 is to be given precedence over *Simia gibbon* C. Miller, 1779 by any zoologist who considers that both names denote the same species-group taxon;
- (2) to place the species name *syndactyla* Raffles, 1821, as published in the binomen *Simia syndactyla*, on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology with an

- endorsement that it is to be given precedence over *Simia gibbon* C. Miller, 1779 by any zoologist who believes that both names denote the same species-group taxon;
- (3) to place the specific name *gibbon* C. Miller, 1779, as published in the binomen *Simia gibbon*, on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology with an endorsement that it is not to be given precedence over *Simia syndactyla* Raffles, 1821, by any zoologist who believes that both names denote the same species-group taxon.